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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT ANBAR: IMPROVING SECURITY BRINGS PROVINCIAL
COUNCIL BACK TO RAMADI

Classified By: AL-ANBAR PRT LEADER JAMES SORIANO FOR REASONS
1.4(b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Anbar reporting cable.

12. (C) Summary. The Anbar Provincial Council held its first official meetings in the provincial capital of Ramadi in over a year on May 3 and May 13. Having fled to Baghdad in the face of insurgent threats in March, 2006, council members attribute their return to Anbar to the improved security situation in the province. Seeing an eventual end to the insurgency and the beginning of the post-war period, Anbaris are entering a critical period of political jockeying as various parties attempt to define the post-war period. The recent announcement by anti-insurgent tribal coalition leader Sheikh Sattar Abu Risha that he is forming a new national political party is just one indication of the return to political normalcy in Anbar. The return of the Provincial Council to Ramadi and the move to form a new political grouping are evidence that Anbaris sense that they are emerging from a long battle into the post-war period. End Summary.

Provincial Council Returns to Ramadi

13. (U) Anbar's Provincial Council (PC) met in Ramadi on May 13, the second such official meeting in the provincial capital in two weeks. The PC has been absent from Ramadi since March, 2006, when many of its members fled for the relative safety of Baghdad amid continuing insurgent threats. Since that time, the PC has been holding regular meetings in Baghdad, but in agreement with MNF-West and with PRT encouragement, PC Chairman Abdulsalam Abdullah has signaled his intention to begin moving Provincial Council meetings back to Ramadi.

14. (C) The provincial government as a whole has not yet resumed normal functioning because of insurgent threats. Although the meetings were held in Ramadi, they took place in the protective environment of Camp Blue Diamond, an MNF-West forward operating base on the city's outskirts. & Being here makes us closer to the people, closer to the situation in Anbar,8 Abdulsalam told us. The PC publicized its Ramadi meetings in an attempt to highlight their presence in Ramadi to the Anbari people. &We are working on bringing telephone service back, electricity back, and to create more jobs for the young people. We want the people to know this,8 Abdulsalam explained.

15. (C) At the May 13 meeting, the Provincial CouQ1 discussed plans to renovate the war-damaged Government Center in downtown Ramadi, which contains the Council's permanent chambers. The PRT and MNF-West are engaged in those reconstruction efforts, and the PC hopes to move into its renovated facilities in Ramadi by the end of August thus completing the return of all PC business to the

provincial capital.

Improved Security

¶16. (C) Abdulsalam cites the recently improved security situation in Anbar as enabling the Council to resume meetings in Ramadi.

-- According to MNF-West records, there were 160 security incidents throughout the province for the week ending May 16, compared to weekly totals in the 430-440 range in October, 2006;

--The city of Ramadi has experienced a dramatic improvement in security. Only 20 security incidents were recorded for the city and its surrounding area for the week ending May 16, compared to weekly totals in the 120-130 range in October, 2006;

-- IP recruitment among the province,s young men is up significantly. While there were only about 1,000 police officers on the payroll at the beginning of 2006, today there are nearly 15,000, and the Ministry of Interior has authorized 21,000;

-- Even Iraqi Army (IA) recruitment, which has lagged behind IP recruitment, is up. The IA netted 1,200 new Anbari recruits in a recent recruiting drive.

-- As further evidence of improved security, Abdulsalam and Ma'amoun took a walking tour through several central Ramadi neighborhoods last month. Such an outing would not have been possible as recently as earlier this year because of the risk of insurgent attack.

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A New Political Party

¶17. (U) As another sign of growing stability, Sheikh Sattar Abu Risha, the leader of a coalition of anti-insurgent tribal leaders in the Ramadi area, announced last month the formation of a new political party, the Iraqi Awakening Movement⁸ (SAI). Sattar says the SAI will be a secular party with a national appeal (read Sunni national appeal). The new party is clearly a potential challenge to the Islamic Party (IIP), the Sunni political grouping that controls the Provincial Council.

¶18. (C) Sattar's relationship with the Provincial Council has long been rocky. In the past, he and his supporters have criticized it for being ineffective and absent from the scene in the battle against the insurgency. On the other side, Council members and other Sattar detractors accuse him of making a local power play. Recently, both sides have sought to mend fences. Their relations are publicly polite, but in private conversations with us, both sides still air their suspicions of the other.

¶19. (C) In recent weeks, Sattar has stepped up pressure on the Council, seeking a power-sharing agreement in which Sattar supporters would be apportioned as many as 20 seats on the 48-seat body. Talks are ongoing between the two camps. In a show of good will, the PC members traveled to Sattar's Ramadi residence at the conclusion of their May 13 meeting. One PC member told us that he expects an eventual agreement between the PC and the SAI, but it will come "slowly, slowly.⁸

PRT Comment

¶10. (C) The recent improvements in security and the return of the Provincial Council to Ramadi are certainly evidence

of positive trends. Anbar Province is not out of the woods yet on security, but it is not too soon to begin planning for the post-war recovery. That is what Anbaris themselves are doing. With the reduction in insurgent violence, Anbaris are increasingly expecting local government to provide basic services and to be responsive to their needs. That impetus is behind the Provincial Council's return to Ramadi and is even seen in Sattar's bid to form a new political party. Today there is a public mood of rising expectations on basic services, security, and job. This mood is itself a sign that Anbaris sense that they are emerging from a long battle into the post-war period. The recent windfall of good news on the security front presents us with the opportunity to push ahead on a menu of economic, governance, and rule-of-law initiatives that hitherto had been hindered or completely impeded by the insurgency. We are now in the process of increasing the number of civilians on MNF-West's four PRTs. It is our intention to use these "fresh troops" to consolidate the gains on security and put into place an irreversible momentum that will bring stability to the province.

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